

# Feds praise city officials, Whittenberg students

Greenhouse made of used plastic bottles called symbol of city's push for sustainability

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Mayor Knox White, left, Lillian Brock Flemming, Stan Meiburg, regional administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency, and Ed Jennings, right, regional administrator for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, stand inside A.J. Whittenberg Elementary's greenhouse, created from recycled 2-liter bottles, after a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday, July 31, 2013. / Heidi Heilbrunn/Staff

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It might look out of place anywhere else, but it fits right in at A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School of Engineering: a greenhouse made of used two-liter soft drink bottles.

Federal officials from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development came to Greenville on Wednesday to see the creation

of the school's budding engineers, and to get a look at what city officials are doing with a \$1.8 million Connections for Sustainability grant.

"I can't think of a better symbol for how environmental protection and a good quality of life go together," Stan Meiburg of the EPA told city and school officials outside the school.

Students collected more than 2,000 plastic bottles and built the greenhouse, which is part of the school's organic garden and composting facility, during the past school year.

The greenhouse includes a system to capture rainwater in barrels that are used to water the plants.

The greenhouse project was part of a Champions of the Environment grant from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control and was directed by the city of Greenville's "livability educator," Jaclin DuRant.

The federal money helped the city develop a citywide housing strategy, improve permitting processes, study bus and rapid transit feasibility, and do education and outreach about sustainability, DuRant told GreenvilleOnline.com.

Mayor Knox White said the grant is helping the city turn the former floodplain in the area that has been thought of as "Greenville's backyard" into a park.

"This is an area that should be a park, and thanks to the boost we got with this planning grant we're able to move along with the vision of a park in this area," he said.

Meiburg, of the EPA, called White "one of the nation's leaders in thinking about sustainable communities, sustainable development and what it takes to make the city a continuing vibrant and exciting and engaging place."

Greenville's grant was one of 42 chosen nationwide and one of 14 that received joint funding from two agencies.

The project, called Connections for Sustainability: Linking Greenville's Neighborhoods to Jobs and Open Space, began in spring 2011.